SECRETARY OF WAR
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

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MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOW FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Elevation of Assistant Secretary of War for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict and Strengthening Departmental Support of the Special Operations Enterprise

Forty years since the creation of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and the Assistant Secretary of War for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASW(SO/LIC)), and over 80 years since the creation of USSOCOM's predecessor, the Office of Strategic Services, special operations forces (SOF) remain the Joint Force's pathfinder and our Nation's vanguard in an era of global uncertainty and strategic competition. Despite this contribution to the Joint Force and our Nation, resourcing for SOF remains behind current operational and force posture. It is time for a bold, foundational change.

By law, the ASW(SO/LIC) is the principal civilian advisor to the Secretary of War on special operations matters and exercises authority, direction, and control of all special operations-peculiar (SO-p) administrative matters relating to the organization, training, and equipping of special operations forces through the administrative chain of command that runs from the President, to the Secretary of War, to ASW(SO/LIC), to Commander, USSOCOM. In creating this role, congress defined the ASW(SO/LIC)'s authority and scope of responsibility for SO-p administrative matters as analogous to those Secretaries of the Military Departments exercise over the Services. In section 907 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, congress further directed that DoW update Department policies, guidance, and processes to institutionalize these roles and responsibilities so that the ASW(SO/LIC) can effectively carry out the civilian oversight of SOF.

To meet the intent of congress, I direct the following administrative actions to elevate the position to equal footing within the Department to that of the ASW(SO/LIC)'s Military Department Secretary peers and enable the ASW(SO/LIC) to fully and effectively exercise these statutory authorities.

I. Statutory Responsibilities, Elevation, and Renaming of ASW(SO/LIC)

I direct the Director of Administration and Management (DA&M) to coordinate with the Assistant Secretary of War for Legislative Affairs to draft legislative proposals to establish an Under Secretary of Strategic Services (OSS) to succeed the Assistant Secretary of War for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict in the exercise of the authorities defined in title 10, U.S. Code, section 138(b)(a)(A)(i) and 167(f) and to amend title 10, U.S. Code, section 139b(a) to rename the Secretariate for Special Operations as the Office of Strategic Services.

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Unless and until such time as the name of the position and Office are changed by statute, the ASW(SO/LIC) is hereby renamed the Assistant Secretary of War for the Office of Strategic Services (ASW(OSS)), as a secondary title to be used in public communications, official correspondence, ceremonial contexts, and non-statutory documents within the executive branch, and the Secretariate for Special Operations is, similarly, hereby renamed the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) as a secondary title.

The ASW(OSS) shall be recognized as a Code 2 position within the DoW Order of Precedence, sequenced accordingly with the other Under Secretaries. The Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of War and Deputy Assistant Secretaries of War of the OSS shall be recognized as Code 3 positions, sequenced accordingly with other Deputy Under and Assistant Secretaries. DA&M is directed to update and reissue the DoW Order of Precedence to reflect these changes.

II. Directives for Resources, Personnel, Pentagon Facilities

To support this elevation and provide the necessary institutional capacity for the newly established ASW(OSS), I direct the following actions necessary for the ASW(OSS) to fully and effectively exercise these statutory authorities:

- The Under Secretary of War (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer of the Department of War (USW(C)), in coordination with Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE), will reallocate operations and maintenance (O&M) resources totaling no less than $45 million annually in a dedicated program element, and reimbursable authority, across the Future Years Defense Program to fully resource the day-to-day operations of the OSS, subject to periodic review by the Deputy Secretary of War for potential efficiencies or additional requirements.

- The DA&M and the USW(C) will immediately coordinate to identify, allocate, and transfer 75 additional civilian personnel billets, including no fewer than five Senior Executive Service billets, to the OSS, within 60 days. Because these billets and both permanent and temporary personnel who may fill them are centrally managed by Washington Headquarters Service (WHS), this would incur OSW civilian labor cost increases not accounted for in the $45 million of O&M directed above.

- The Joint Staff will allocate 25 additional joint qualified military personnel billets to the OSS.

- The DA&M will task the WHS to identify, secure, and provide consolidated office space within the Pentagon to co-locate the leadership and staff of the ASW(OSS) and the OSS. This consolidation must support appropriate security requirements and communication infrastructure, include requisite conference space, and be accompanied by comparable Pentagon Reservation parking allocations.

I have determined that an adjustment to the personnel limitation under title 10 U.S. Code, section 143 is necessary to accommodate increased workload associated with the performance of inherently governmental functions by ASW(OSS). Pursuant to section 1111(b)(2)(A) of Public

Law 110–417, as amended, I hereby adjust that limitation by 168 for OASW(OSS), effective immediately.

III. Budgetary and Resource Authority and Control of SOF-Aligned Funding

To support the ASW(OSS)'s statutory oversight responsibilities, the ASW(OSS) will have budgetary roles and responsibilities for SO-p budgetary matters analogous to those of the Secretaries of the Military Departments.

- Principal Staff Assistants, Secretaries of the Military Departments, and DoW Component Heads will seek concurrence from the ASW(OSS) on staff actions and proposals related to Military Department-, Component-, and OSW-managed appropriations and budgetary matters that affect the SOF enterprise.

- I also direct OSW CAPE to remove the SOF portfolio from the Global Shaping Division and assure new portfolio management for a dedicated SOF-focused portfolio.

IV. Delegation of Authority for Special Operations-Peculiar Acquisition

The ASW(OSS) is my principal civilian advisor, advocate, and delegated oversight official for SO-p acquisition, resources, equipment, and related administrative matters, and may issue binding policy, direction, and oversight consistent with title 10 U.S. Code, section 167 and without limiting, transferring, or diminishing any authority or responsibility vested by law in the Commander, USSOCOM.

- The Under Secretary of War for Acquisition and Sustainment shall coordinate with OASW(OSS) on Department-wide acquisition policy, decisions, and programs materially affecting SOF.

V. SOF Assigned and Aligned Personnel Management

Principal Staff Assistants and DoW Component Heads shall coordinate with OSS on all matters involving SOF civilian personnel policy, special and incentive pays, force management, talent management, manpower requirements, and force structure alignment unless otherwise prohibited by law or regulation.

VI. Representation in Strategic Guidance

I direct the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Policy (OUSW(P)) to ensure SOF is distinctly delineated in the Defense Planning Guidance and Guidance for the Employment of the Force, including providing guidance for increased investment in SOF modernization, major platform recapitalization, and increased readiness to support dynamic operational demands and national objectives.

VII. Participation in Senior Leadership Fora

To reflect the ASW(OSS)'s authority and scope of responsibility for SO-p administrative matters, the ASW(OSS) is designated as a member or advisor to all senior leadership councils and governance structures within the Department. Consistent with applicable law, the ASW(OSS) shall be included in the: Senior Leaders Council, Joint Requirements Oversight Council, Secretary's Weekly Priorities Review, Program Budget Review, Deputy's Management Action Group, Sensitive Technical Activities Oversight Committee, and Special Access Program governance structures and all other fora that the Secretaries of the Military Departments are members.

VIII. Immediate Support to SOF

In addition to the enduring changes described above, in consideration of the SOF enterprise's current contributions to the Joint Force, I hereby:

- Direct the Military Departments to prioritize service support to SOF requirements wherever feasible, such as providing service common platforms and combat loss recoupment.

- Direct OSW action to identify and prioritize opportunities in FY 2027 execution and to consider the currently submitted USSOCOM resourcing and manpower requests in the FY2028-2032 budget development process as top tier priorities for the Department, consistent with the mission areas I have directed them to carry out.

IX. Implementation and Transition

In addition to the specific actions directed above, Principal Staff Assistants and DoW Component Heads must ensure that the ASW(OSS) and OSS staff are integrated into all appropriate fora and processes, as equals, alongside the Secretaries of the Military Departments and their secretariat staffs.

The terms of this memorandum are effective immediately. All administrative actions directed above shall be taken within 30 days of the date of this memorandum and coordinated with ODA&M, OUSW(P), OUSW(C), the Office of the General Counsel, and CAPE. Any unresolved issues or elements not implemented within 30 days shall be brought to my attention. Principal Staff Assistants and OSW Component Heads shall take appropriate action to incorporate these changes in policy into relevant current and future DoW Issuances.

